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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LIMA 004261

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958

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SUBJECT: DENSITY OF COCA CULTIVATION: NEW MEASUREMENT

REF: LIMA 02674

SUMMARY

1. Eradication of coca in Peru has historically been measured and reported in hectares (2.47 acres). Embassy has reported on an expansion in the area under coca cultivation in Peru: UN figures for 2004 released in May show an increase of 14 percent over the previous year. In addition, on-the-ground measurements are confirming that the densities of coca plants in the fields are increasing by up to 350% over what was once considered a norm of 40,000 plants/hectare. As a result of the increasing densities, the use of hectares to quantify eradicated coca is misleading and may understate the eradication efforts being undertaken by the GOP. To correct this potential inaccuracy, DEVIDA is considering new units of measure as a goal for eradication. The most likely would be the measurement of eradication in equivalent terms of potential kilograms or metric tons of cocaine production averted (CPA).
END SUMMARY

SETTING A GOAL

2. A meeting of the Multi-Institutional Committee, chaired by DEVIDA and attended by NAS, was held on September 8 to consider the eradication goal for 2006. The Executive Director of DEVIDA, Nils Ericsson, suggested a goal of 14,000 hectares, almost double this year's goal of 8,000 hectares. The subject of densities was raised because it has been realized that a hectare of coca in one area is not equal to a hectare of coca found in another. Densities range from a few fields with under 40,000 plants per hectare to a majority of fields with well over 40,000. During eradication operations in San Martin-Santa Lucia in August, the average densities were measured at 143% of the 40,000 plants per hectare base once considered 100% density for the Huallaga area. The 1,198 hectares that were eradicated were the equivalent of 1,698 hectares if density is taken into account.

3. A member of DEVIDA's inner council suggested that the goal could be set in terms of CPA. Discussion of this approach made it clear that a goal of CPA put the focus of eradication efforts on the real goal, i.e. the denial of coca leaf for the manufacturing of cocaine. An advantage of this approach is that it serves to shift media attention from sympathy for poor farmers whose hectares of coca are being eradicated to the focus on the reduction of cocaine that could have been produced from those hectares. It would also encourage the GOP to eradicate in areas of high densities as opposed to being tempted to go after easy coca just for the hectare count, and it avoids the metric term, "hectare," that the U.S. Government and American public do not commonly use.

PROPOSING A FORMULA

4. The Multi-Institutional Committee established a sub-committee to draft a detailed proposal. This group consists of representatives from DEVIDA, CORAH, CADA and NAS. A formula was devised by this group that uses the following information: the results of three 10m X 10m samples taken at each field to be eradicated, the extrapolation of those samples to arrive at the density of the entire field and the leaf yield of the plants in the particular valley/zone where the field is located based on yield studies made during the Breakthrough study. The formula uses the following dividers: 100 kg of coca leaf equals one kg of cocaine paste, and cocaine paste becomes cocaine at a ratio of three parts paste to one part cocaine. The formula will be adjusted as scientific laboratory studies refine values.

5. Following is an example of the application of the formula: three hectares of coca leaf are eradicated with an average density for the three fields of 60,000 plants, for a total of 180,000 plants. 40,000 plants in this valley yield 2,000 kg of leaf. This comes to 9,000 kg of leaf in our example. Since 100 kg of coca yields 1 kg of cocaine paste, we get 90 kg of paste. Then, applying the 3:1 paste to cocaine ratio to this example, 30 kg of cocaine production have been averted.

16. The term "hectares" will still be used as a secondary reference point. It will provide longitudinal and cross-country comparison for USG and GOP agencies.

CONSEQUENCES FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

17. One concern is the impact this change in measurement to set the planned eradication goal would have on alternative development goals. AD hectares that are voluntarily eradicated are often low density and small in area as they are part of a farmer's diversified crop. It is possible that in the future, forced eradication campaigns might be followed by alternative development interventions with the goal of maintaining the area coca-free, thereby eliminating hectares as a goal for AD. Indicators exist for AD that evaluate the level of achievement of sustainable coca reduction within communities as an additional measure to AD successes in terms of eradicated hectares.

18. Comment: A presentation will be made to the Multi-Institutional Committee in two weeks outlining the details of this potential new measure of effectiveness for further decision-making. Some might view this as a means of raising our eradication statistics: in fact, we believe it is a much more direct and useful measure of the impact of our programs, as our real goal is to avert cocaine from reaching the streets of U.S. cities.
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